

STATEMENT OF AL BARBER

PRESIDENT OF CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF FAIRFIELD COUNTY

On Raised Bill No. 6532

**"An Act Concerning the Statute of Limitations for Bringing
an Action for Damages for the Sexual Assault of a Minor"**

I AM HERE TODAY TO SPEAK AS NOT ONLY THE PRESIDENT OF CATHOLIC CHARITIES IN FAIRFIELD COUNTY, THE LARGEST NON-GOVERNMENT HUMAN AND SOCIAL SERVICES PROVIDER IN BOTH THE COUNTY AND, ALONG WITH MY ASSOCIATES IN NORWICH AND HARTFORD, THE LARGEST IN THE STATE, BUT ALSO AS A TWENTY YEAR RESIDENT OF CONNECTICUT AND A CONCERNED TAXPAYER.

CATHOLIC CHARITIES AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH ARE THE UNDERPINNINGS AND KEY FABRIC OF THE SAFETY NET OF SERVICES THAT ARE ABSOLUTELY CRUCIAL TO THIS STATE'S RECOVERY AND FUTURE GROWTH. CATHOLIC CHARITIES, SPONSORED BY THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, INCLUDES AN EXTENSIVE NETWORK OF FOOD OPERATIONS CURRENTLY SERVING MORE THAN 1.1 MILLION MEALS IN FAIRFIELD COUNTY ALONE, A RAPIDLY GROWING PORTFOLIO OF SUPPORTIVE, AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS IN OUR MOST CHALLENGED CITIES, AND, VERY IMPORTANT IN THIS ENVIRONMENT AND TO THIS ISSUE, A BROAD RANGE OF COUNSELING PROGRAMS FOR THE CHRONICALLY MENTALLY ILL, FAMILIES IN CRISIS, THOSE WHO HAVE LOST THEIR JOBS AND HOMES, AND CHILDREN WHO CAN'T COMPREHEND THE CONFUSION AND HARDSHIP SURROUNDING THEM. CATHOLIC CHARITIES SERVES PEOPLE OF ALL BACKGROUNDS AND FAITHS. WE WILL CLEARLY BE DISTRACTED FROM OUR BASIC MISSION AND NEGATIVELY IMPACTED BY THE PASSAGE OF BILL 6532. WHY, YOU WONDER...BECAUSE THE BILL WILL DIRECTLY IMPACT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND ITS MEMBERS AND FRIENDS WHO SPONSOR AND UNDERWRITE THE BULK OF THESE SERVICES. I COULD EASILY OFFER THE SAME ANALOGY FOR THE WONDERFUL CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN THE STATE AND CAN ASSURE YOU, THAT, THE MAYORS OF OUR FINE CITIES WOULD AGREE THAT LIFE WITHOUT CATHOLIC SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL SERVICES WOULD BE CATASTROPHIC.

I SPENT MUCH OF MY CAREER AT GE BEFORE JOINING CATHOLIC CHARITIES AND LEARNED THAT WHEN FACED WITH MAJOR PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES OF ANY DEPTH OR CONSEQUENCE, IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT THOSE WHO ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR ACHIEVING POSITIVE OUTCOMES THROUGH THEIR LEADERSHIP MUST USE ALL OF THE RESOURCES AT THEIR COMMAND IN A VERY TARGETED WAY TO FIX THOSE PROBLEMS, OR, AT THE VERY LEAST, NOT LET THEM WORSEN. THIS BILL, BY CREATING A NEVER ENDING LIABILITY FOR PRIVATE RELIGIOUS AND CHARITABLE INSTITUTIONS, SAPS VALUABLE RESOURCES BETTER SPENT ON PROVIDING VITAL SOCIAL SERVICES, ESPECIALLY AT A TIME WHEN THE STATE'S FINANCIAL CRISIS WILL LEAD TO CUTS IN THOSE SAME SERVICES. THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH AND CATHOLIC CHARITIES RAISE SUBSTANTIAL SUMS AND STRETCH THOSE DOLLARS TO IMPROVE

THE LIVES OF THE POOREST AND NEEDIEST AMONG US. RATHER THAN UNFAIRLY PENALIZING PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS, SUCH AS THE CHURCH, THE STATE SHOULD RECOGNIZE US AS A VALUED PARTNER IN MEETING URGENT HUMAN NEEDS. WE ARE NOT THE PROBLEM; WE ARE A BIG PART OF THE SOLUTION.

THIS BILL HOLDS PRIVATE CHARITABLE INSTITUTIONS LIABLE FOREVER WHILE ALLOWING GOVERNMENTAL PROGRAMS TO BE LIABLE NEVER. THE CHANGES SUGGESTED IN THIS BILL DISCRIMINATE AGAINST A CHURCH THAT HAS AGGRESSIVELY AND THOROUGHLY PROTECTED OUR CHILDREN OVER THE PAST 8 YEARS.

MY ASSOCIATES WHO OVERSEE THIS EFFORT ARE PROVIDING TESTIMONY TODAY TO THAT EFFECT.

IN SUMMARY, IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT YOU CONSIDER OUR TRACK RECORD AND OUR EXTRAORDINARY CONTRIBUTIONS THROUGHOUT THIS STATE FOR MANY, MANY YEARS. MOST ESPECIALLY, IN TODAY'S VIOLENT ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL STORMS, PLEASE DON'T BITE THE HAND THAT FEEDS SO MANY. IF NOTHING ELSE IS ACCOMPLISHED IN THIS PROCESS, I ASK YOU TO CONSIDER PROTECTING ALL CHILDREN IN ALL INSTITUTIONS IN THE SAME FASHION. MAYBE THEN EVERYONE WOULD TAKE THIS MATTER AS SERIOUSLY AS THE CATHOLIC CHURCH DOES.

THANK YOU.